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TO : The Acting Secretary

THROUGH : The Under Secretary for Political Affairs
S/S

FROM : ARA - Mr. Mallory

SUBJECT : Continued illegal flights over Cuban territory from U.S. airfields

Discussion:

The recent incident in which a small aircraft departed from Florida and was blown to pieces together with its two occupants, apparently while attempting to bomb a Cuban sugar mill, serves to highlight a situation which is contributing to the present unsatisfactory state of our relations with the GOC, and, perhaps more importantly, is giving the GOC damaging propaganda with which to foment anti-American sentiment among the Cuban people. Despite the reported step-up in enforcement activities on the part of Justice, Treasury and the FAA following the leaflet-dropping flight of Diaz Lanz over Habana last October 26th, the Department has continued to receive numerous accounts of harassment flights over Cuba, many reportedly for the purpose of dropping incendiaries on sugar cane fields. On February 21, a plane is reported to have flown over a part of Habana, and, when subjected to ground fire, jettisoned two or three bombs at sea not far from one of Fidel Castro's residences. The propaganda-use to which this incident will be put needs no elaboration.

While we have no evidence that the planes on February 21 or any of the others (except for the Diaz Lanz flight and the plane destroyed last week) came from U.S. territory, we must now accept this possibility and recognize the credence which will be given in Cuba and elsewhere in the world to Castro's assertions that all such raids have their genesis in the United States. I feel that it is of the utmost importance that every available resource be used to insure that air incursions of this kind do not depart from U.S. soil. Unless we can maintain the position that the USG is exhausting every effort to prevent them, we are in a highly vulnerable position with respect to three important phases of our approach to the entire Cuban problem; namely, (1) our efforts to prevent the Castro Government from obtaining arms or airplanes from whatever source, including the Soviet Bloc, because of the plausibility such raids lend to the Castro thesis that he needs arms to defend himself; (2) any moves which the USG may wish to make to achieve OAS joint action on the Cuban problem because of the counter-arguments and attacks which the air raids make available to the Cubans; and (3) hemisphere opinion, now increasingly critical of Castro, is likely to swing to his support if the raids are not

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not halted. Such raids also serve the GOC as an effective rallying cry to allay increasing criticism and dissatisfaction among the Cuban populace, and are both a direct and indirect threat to U.S. citizens resident in Cuba (see Embtel TOUSI 113, February 23 attached in which the Director USIA is requested to bring up this matter at today's OCB luncheon).

Conclusion:

It is the considered opinion of ARA that renewed and imaginative efforts should be made by the pertinent federal agencies to prevent these flights from originating in U.S. territory and to determine and prosecute (or otherwise deter) those persons who are responsible for them. It is evident that the stepped-up efforts of these agencies toward this end, which followed the Diaz Lanz leaflet-dropping flight over Habana last October 26th and the President's request that something be done to stop this type of activity, have not been sufficient. Failure to achieve the resolution of this problem could contribute significantly to the continued tenure of the present Cuban Administration.

Recommendations:

That you bring up this problem at the next meeting of the Cabinet. The factors which have prompted a recommendation for consideration at this high level are as follows:

(1) the seriousness of the problem and the failure so far to resolve it.
(2) the fact that it involves various federal agencies including Customs and Coast Guard (Treasury), FBI and INS, (Justice), FAA (White House), and the Department of Defense (whose top officials will be present) which makes essential the closest cooperation and coordination.
(3) the apparent need for a new and effective approach to this problem.
(4) the opportunity which this approach would give to make clear at the highest level that the Department does not urge greater efforts at enforcement because of any desire to protect or support Castro but for quite the contrary reasons as outlined above.

Concurrences:

SCA - Mr. Huston

Attachment:

Embtel TOUSI 113, February 23, 1960.

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